

Frequently Asked Questions School & District Accountability System

*Toward preparing
students to be
college, career,
and culturally
ready graduates*

What are the elements of Alaska's new school and district accountability system?

There are two components of Alaska's new accountability system. They are the Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI) and the revised Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) targets. These are explained in detail below.

What is an ASPI score?

Each year, through ASPI, Alaska's differentiated system of recognition, accountability, and support will present an overall picture of a school's performance in ensuring that students are college and career ready. ASPI will include a weighted combination of academic achievement, school progress, attendance rates, graduation rates, and college and career ready indicators (ACT/SAT/WorkKeys scores and WorkKeys participation). ASPI represents the overall picture of a school's progress. (Note that ASPI applies only to schools, not to districts.)

What are Star Ratings?

The overall ASPI score will determine the category, or star rating, of each school. Five-star schools will represent the top performing schools in the state, while the lowest performing schools will be rated as 1-star schools.

What are the new Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) targets?

AMO targets in reading, writing, and mathematics will be set that are ambitious but achievable. The targets will be for the all-students group and for each of the currently required subgroups. The targets, in each assessed subject, increase in annual increments toward a goal of reducing by half the percentage of students who are not proficient within six years. Targets will be set for the state, each district, and each school based on the 2012 state assessment data. A school or district will meet the AMO targets if it meets either the state target or its individual school or district target. The target of 95% participation in assessments must be met to meet the AMO target.

How does the new school and district accountability system compare to the former designations under Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?

Alaska will no longer be reporting AYP results. Instead, the state will report an ASPI score and star rating for each school. The state will report on whether each school, district, and state met the AMO targets. Reporting of the AMO targets will include reporting of graduation and attendance rates, and will be similar to AYP reporting. However, under AYP, if a school missed any target in any subgroup, it would have been identified, over a period of years, as a school needing to be restructured. The



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new state accountability system uses the ASPI score and progress toward meeting AMO targets to determine which schools will need to submit school improvement plans and/or to receive a designation as a Reward, Priority, or Focus school.

How are the subgroups included in Alaska's new accountability system?

All required subgroups under No Child Left Behind will be included in the new state accountability system. These are the economically disadvantaged students, the limited English proficient students, the students with disabilities, and all six ethnic categories. However, there are several important differences from AYP reporting:

- The minimum size for a subgroup to be included in the accountability system is at least five students.
- Only four primary subgroups are included in the school progress indicator of the ASPI index: economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, limited English proficient students, and Alaska Native students.

What students are included in the calculations for the ASPI index and for the AMO targets?

All students who took state assessments in reading, writing or mathematics are included in ASPI's academic achievement indicator. Students who took state assessments for two consecutive years are included in ASPI's school progress indicator.

For the AMO targets:

- Only full-academic-year students are included.
- The scores of former limited English proficient students or former students with disabilities may be included for two years after they are exited from those categories.
- Only 1% of the students who took the alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards may be included as proficient.

What reporting is required under the new accountability system?

EED will report annually the ASPI score and star rating for each school. It will report annually on whether each school, district, and state has met the AMO targets in reading, writing, and mathematics, the participation rates, and the graduation and attendance rates for the all-students group and for all identified subgroups with at least five students.

The state and all districts will be required to report the information to parents in the form of state, district and school report cards. The ASPI information and the AMO target reporting will replace the current AYP information in the report cards. Achievement results for all students and subgroups must be reported in the four proficiency levels. The two-year trends in student achievement by grade level must be reported as in the current report cards. The district must report all schools that are designated as Reward, Priority or Focus schools. The district and school report cards must be disseminated to parents as early in the school year as possible after all information is available.

What are Reward schools?

Reward schools are in the top 10% of the highest-performing and high-progress schools in the state. The highest-performing schools are those in the top 10% based on ASPI scores that have met the AMO targets for two years and have at least an 85% graduation rate if the school enrolls 12th-graders. The high-progress schools are those in the top 10% based on the Growth and Proficiency Index for all students and for each of the four primary subgroups. These schools will be given special recognition and encouraged to serve as models for other schools.

What are Priority schools?

Priority schools are identified from among the 1-star and 2-star schools that are most likely to benefit from a significant program of improvement and increased support and oversight from the district and EED. Data used in consideration of a priority school designation includes the ASPI score, state assessments, the Growth and Proficiency Index, and graduation rates for all students and the subgroups over time, the school's size and characteristics, and other information received from desk audits and consultations with superintendents. At least 5% of the lowest-performing Title I schools are designated Priority and remain so for at least three years. Priority schools are required to develop and implement a comprehensive school improvement plan to implement the seven turnaround principles as required by state regulations and the U.S. Department of Education. EED may designate additional schools as Priority schools if EED determines that the school will benefit from the designation. (4 AAC 06.865)

What are Focus schools?

Focus schools are selected from among the 1-star and 2-star schools that were not identified as Priority schools but would benefit from a program of improvement targeted to the specific needs identified in the school. At least 10% of the lowest-performing Title I schools are designated as Focus schools for at least two years. Focus schools are required to develop and implement a school improvement plan targeted to the specific needs identified in the school, including consideration of the seven turnaround principles. (4 AAC 06.870)

Which schools are required to submit a School Improvement Plan?

All Priority, Focus, 1-star, and 2-star schools are required to submit School Improvement Plans to EED for approval. Schools with a 3-star designation are required to write a School Improvement plan and submit it to their district office for approval. Schools with 4-stars or 5-stars that have not met AMO targets or that have experienced declines in the Growth and Proficiency Index or graduation rates for two years are required to submit to the district for approval a plan to improve the performance of the low-performing subgroup(s). (4 AAC 06.845)

What is the required format for School Improvement Plans?

All improvement plans will be submitted through Alaska STEPP (Steps Toward Educational Progress and Partnership). Alaska STEPP is an online, continuous, and comprehensive planning tool. STEPP's foundations are research-based indicators of success, organized into six domains of the Alaska Effective Schools Framework: curriculum, assessment, instruction, supportive learning environment, professional develop, and leadership. EED provides initial training in using the tool and webinars throughout the year to support schools in their implementation of STEPP. (4 AAC 06.845(b))

How are districts categorized?

All districts will be categorized within one of three tiers. Districts in which less than 25% of the schools are 1- or 2-stars will be Tier 1 districts. Districts in which 25% to 49.99% of the schools are 1-star and 2-star schools, or 25% to 49.99% of the students attend a 1-star or 2-star school, will be Tier 2 districts. Districts in which 50% or more of the schools are 1-star and 2-star schools, or 50% or more of the students attend a 1- or 2-star school, will be Tier 3 districts. (4 AAC 06.850)

What districts will be required to submit a District Improvement Plan?

Districts categorized as Tier 2 or 3 will be required to submit an improvement plan to EED under state regulation 4 AAC 06.850.

What supports will be available to districts and schools by EED?

Districts categorized as Tier 1 and all schools have access to information and resources from EED aligned to the six domain areas of Alaska's Effective Schools Framework through the EED website, audio- or web-conferences, and through regional or state conferences offered to participants from all districts.

Districts categorized as Tiers 2 and 3 and schools designated as Priority or Focus schools have increased resources and support available from EED. Depending on the specific needs of each school and district, and as a result of consultation with school and district leadership, supports available from EED could include one or more of the following:

- Training, support and feedback in use of Alaska STEPP online school improvement planning process.
- Training in use of resources on the EED website that support implementation of new education initiatives.
- A School Improvement Coach assigned to work onsite to help implement the school improvement plan through the school year.
- Support to participate in training events such as the Teaching and Learning Support Institute and Summer Literacy Institute.
- Partnership with statewide coach and mentoring programs for school leaders and teachers.
- Support from up to 20% of the district's Title I allocation (which was previously used to provide supplemental educational services or choice under NCLB) for Title I Priority or Focus schools.
- Support for Title I Priority or Focus schools from the state's school improvement funding under section 1003(a) that was previously available to Title I schools in improvement or above.
- Support for Title I Priority schools from the School Improvement Grants (SIG) under section 1003(g) that will be awarded in the next competition to begin in the 2014-2015 school year.